1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Veddas are coming more and more in contact with their Sinhalese neighbours, and it is extremely unlikely that the next generation will remain pure.

We visited two of the nearest chena settlements of these people, the huts (Plate X, figure 1) were about as well built as those of the average Sinhalese chena, though the cultivation itself was certainly less systematic and orderly. The Namadewa folk lived in one settlement while the Morane and Unapane inhabited another.

Although all these Veddas have come in contact with the Sinhalese and are visited by Moormen hawkers for trade purposes—as indeed even the wildest have been for many generations—they have retained their old custom of not allowing the stranger in the midst of their settlement where he might meet their women. A rough shelter had been built at one corner of the Namadewa chena in which the pedlars sat and waited until the Vedda men came to bargain with them. Hence in the main these people have retained their old virtues of truthfulness, chastity and courtesy. The first, upon which practically every observer has remarked, was modified in a particular direction for they all wished to show that they were pure-blooded Veddas of the Morane and Unapane clans, which were considered superior to the rest. So the Namadewa men lied freely, declaring that they belonged to Morane and Unapane, and one young man, otherwise a good informant, insisted that he was still unmarried, as he did not want to own that his wife was a Namadewa woman. Cases of intermarriage with Sinhalese were also emphatically denied, or only admitted after much cross-examination. Plate III represents a number of the men we met at Bendiyagalge.

Danigala. The Danigala Veddas of the Nilgala district present a peculiar phase of the clash of civilization and barbarism. They are the classical "wild Veddas" of Ceylon described by so many travellers; their descent is pure but their own customs have been almost entirely forgotten, and are certainly ignored at the present day. They live in the park country, have a chena and a banana garden, and do a good trade in cattle both by herding for the Sinhalese, retaining every fifth calf as is the

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

putation when he first joined our party, but it was very soon evident that he was handier, quicker and more intelligent in every way than the other peasant Sinhalese with whom we came in contact. Still later we discovered that by his influence a large clearing had been illegally made in a remote part of the jungle near Nuwaragala, and that on account of this he was doing his best to prevent our coming in contact with the Sitala Wanniya Veddas in whose territory the clearing had been made. Although in this he played us false and caused much needless trouble we found him in other matters a perfectly trustworthy witness, and as he had associated more or less constantly with the Kovil Vanamai Veddas from the age of 10 to 20, there is every reason to accept his account of their condition 25 years ago. At this time there were about 50 families, i.e. some 200 people, who led a wandering hunting life for half of the year, during which time they lived in rock shelters and depended largely on honey; for the rest of the year they paid more or less attention to chena cultivation, growing especially maize and *kurakkan* (*Eleusine coracana*). Two or three families—not necessarily the same year after year—would usually wander and hunt together; such groups of families might also make chenas together, though five or six families would often join to make a single chena.

Although they had a few guns even 20 years ago, bows and arrows were in common use and much of their hunting consisted of monkey drives. There were no mixed Sinhalese and Vedda chenas then. The Arachi remembers three caves belonging to the ancestors of the present Bandaraduwa Veddas, viz. Walimbagalagalge, Ellavellagalge and Vianbendegalge. Each family was the recognised possessor of one or more rocky hills on which there were colonies of the rock bee, but the whole of the small hunting community would join to collect honey from each hill and the honey was always equally shared.

The Kovil Vanamai Veddas belonged to Morane and Unapane and Uru *warugu*. The latter lived apart near Uniche, i.e. between Tumpalamcholai and the coast. The Arachi states that the language has altered during the last 20 years, Tamil tending to displace Sinhalese, thus *tirakodei*, "nothing," is said

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

instead of *kodoi*, *tiru* being a Tamil word, so that a composite word meaning "really nothing" is now used.

At the present day there are probably no more than a dozen families left as representatives of the Kovil Vanamai Veddas and all of these live on Sinhalese chenas and are in dire poverty. The country has been referred to already as unhealthy, monkeys although abundant are not easily approached especially in the dry season, and other game is scarce. Isolated families have settled down in Sinhalese villages to pick up whatever living they can as occasional hired labourers, and some of these people were seen in a wretchedly starved condition. The most prosperous are three families living on the large Sinhalese chena (Plate XII, figure 1) at Bandaraduwa near Devulani tank. But even with the assistance of the chena these people are not well off, and it appeared that they were no strangers to hunger. Owing to their position on the border of the Sinhalese and Tamil country, they had been influenced by both Hinduism and Buddhism to a certain extent. In spite of this they knew numerous Vedda songs and incantations, and the ceremonies following a death which occurred in the vicinity during our visit clearly demonstrated that foreign ideas formed but a thin stratum overlying their own beliefs.

The Uniche Veddas were not seen in their own country but some men were brought to us by the Forest Ranger, Mr S. Perera, at Maha Oya, where the photograph shown in Plate XII was taken. We have no note that these Veddas were Uru *waruge* men, but it seems probable that they represented the Uru *waruge* community recorded (as mentioned by the Vedda Arachi) on the last page. They had retained their own customs and beliefs very largely and appeared to be living in a condition very similar to the people near Devulani, though perhaps they were better fed.

Sitala Wanniya. After visiting so many decaying or degenerate communities a refreshing state of affairs was found at Sitala Wanniya. Here there were at least four families who were living the life their forefathers had lived for generations without perceptible change. They still found game, honey and yams in quantities sufficient not only to support life, but to leave

614 they belonged, which suggested to us that perhaps they belonged to Uru *varuge* or one of the other clans which are considered of inferior status. Although the Arachi of Beligala did not know their *varuge* and believed that they had really forgotten them themselves, our opinion was confirmed by information obtained later from the Arachi of Alutnuwara who said that they were of the Uru and Namadewa *varuge*, while a Vedda of Horabawewa told us that his mother came from Dambani and she was a Namadewa woman.

576 609 As the Arachi of Beligala assured us the Bulugahaladena Veddas lived in a condition precisely similar to those of Dambani, we did not visit their village but arranged for two of them to visit us at Beligala; they greeted us in the same way as the Dambani folk, with loud and guttural voices, accentuating all the "chs," and shook hands. They brought some honey and yams. They said they could not bring *bambara* honey (for it was too early in the year) so they had brought honey from the stingless bee. After a little while they gradually dropped their [194] guttural tones, especially when they were speaking to the villagers and not to us, their voices, naturally deep, assumed a sing-song tone not unlike that of Nila of Sitala Wanniya. We consider that the gruffness of these Veddas is almost entirely affectation. They have been expected to be sullen and morose and never to laugh. For thirty years the Arachi of Beligala has acted as "show-man" to the Veddas of his district, and he always speaks to them in their "language" in similar or even fiercer tones, and he has shown them so many white men that he has quite lost count of their number. He has thus helped to keep up the fiction of "wildness," for these Veddas are not wild since they are not shy but come up, shake hands, ask for presents, and offer to dance.

178 We believe that they keep up few, if any, of the old Vedda customs; they cultivate chenas and keep cattle, their bows and arrows are probably more for show than use, for the Arachi told us that some of them possess guns while others go to the Sinhalese and borrow them. Deschamps says that Veddas never 157 laugh nor have they ever been seen to smile. Of course this is not true of the Veddas of Nilgala, nor do we think it is true of

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

601 576 Terms of respect were commonly used in addressing the aged, thus although *siya* or *mutta* really mean father or grandfather, these words might be used as terms of respect in addressing any old man, and in the same way the terms *kiriamma* (grandmother) or *atta* might be used to any old woman, and we were told that *siya* was constantly used by members of the group in addressing the "senior" or patriarch. An individual of either sex would call his or her father-in-law's father *siya* or *kiriappa*, and a mother-in-law's mother is addressed as *kiriamma*.

Clan Organization.

614 178 It has already been mentioned that the Veddas at the present day are divided into clans (*waruge*); almost every man who calls himself a Vedda can give the name of his *waruge* and this applies even to many village and coast Veddas in whom there is a minimum of true Vedda blood. The clan organization of the Veddas was first pointed out by Nevill, who says: "The Veddas north of the Mahawaeli Ganga have lost their original divisions... and reduced to a few isolated families....The Vaeddas known as coast Vaeddas have abandoned most of their ancestral customs and I cannot even ascertain from them their original name. Vaeddas of the forest districts do not preserve any tradition of relationship with these Vaeddas of the coast[1]." Nevill then gives 614 the following nine names as those of the Vedda clans, to which he adds the Veddas of Tambalagama Pattu, Kattakulam Pattu and Anurajapura as true Veddas though their *waruge* names seem lost.

1. Morana waruge.
2. Unapana waruge.
3. Bandara or Rugam waruge.
4. Namada, Namadana or Nabadana waruge.
5. Ura-wadiya waruge.
6. Uruwa waruge.
7. Kowil waname.
8. Aembala or Ambala waruge.
9. Tala waruge.

[1] *Taprobanian*, Vol. 1, 1886, p. 176.

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

recognize a single expression. The following morning I taxed the people with speaking in Vedda language, but they stoutly declared that they could only speak Sinhalese.

In my opinion the majority of the people of the Maha Wedirata are of Vedda origin, but have discarded their primitive customs as they dwindled in numbers, and while other causes, such as marriage with neighbouring people, tended to still further break down the older customs of the isolated clans that made up the Vedda race as a whole, they still clung in secret to the language of their forefathers, as a binding link and a means of private communication.

At Salavai, in the Panawa Pattu, I found one family who admitted that their grandfather was a real Vedda, belonging to one of the clans occupying the country on the confines of the Kumbukkan river.

From the oldest member of this family I obtained a mass of information respecting the habits and customs of the Vedda people.

According to this individual, who has adopted the Sinhalese name of Disan Hamy, the Veddas were divided up into a number of waruge or clans, each of which occupied and hunted over a specific area of country, and had no connection with the others who lived as separate communities.

The members of each clan were more or less related, and previous to the disintegration of the Veddas as a race, they could not marry any but members of the same waruge.

They lived by hunting, in which only the males took part. Their habitations were caves, and occasionally leaf shelters, but the latter was uncommon.

The females were kept in a state of rigid subjection to the males, and could not take part in the chase, ordinary ceremonials, or conversation with any but those who were immediate relations, or the closest relatives of the husband.

If the husband was pleased to *throw* some meat to his wife, as part of his spoil in the chase, that was all the woman was entitled to. She could not claim a share simply because she was the man's wife.

Under ordinary circumstances, both the males and females were naked, assuming only for special occasions a loin cloth

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

2. VEDDAS OF GUNNER'S QUOIN

THE ferry at Periathurai marked the end of our river journey. Some miles inland was the rock called Gunner's Quoin round which Veddas lived. 131

Under a bo-tree by the river was an image of Ganesha the pot bellied, elephant-headed Hindoo god with offerings of withered lotus flowers before him. In a temple hard by, were massive bells and drums that kept deafening accompaniment on many a ceremonial day when peacock-plumed men, in the self-imposed torture of skewered cheek and pronged back, bounded hither and thither in delirious dance; and here were the implements, prongs and tridents, these frenzied devotees had dedicated to their unhearing god.

At the Tamil village of Manampitiya we were regaled with an old man's tales of the Veddas. He told us of one Patabanda only recently dead, called *walige**-Patabanda owing to his habit of wearing his loin cloth long behind. It appeared this Vedda was a fine marksman. A *rata-mahaimaya*† once wishing to test his skill pointed to a small jak fruit on a tall tree and asked him to shoot. The arrow flew true and stuck in the fruit; whereupon the Vedda feigning anger said roughly, "Now give me my arrow; it was you who asked me to shoot". The timid chief proffered money which was disdainfully refused. The Vedda then taking another arrow hit the stem of the fruit so that it fell and enabled him to recover both arrow and fruit. Thus do men pass into fable. 114 173

We were told many another tale of Veddas and their ways, and of matters connected with the ancient ruins to be found on the rock; of an anchorite who had lived in a cave there unharmed by the bears; and of ancient Vedda kings captured by stratagem and fraud.

A walk of five miles the next morning brought us to the foot of Gunner's Quoin. I was now brimming with expectancy; for I was about to see for the first time the Veddas in their homes; that aboriginal people who had time and again attracted the scholars of Europe, and in whose veins flowed the oldest blood of the inhabitants of Ceylon. They were here when Wijeya came from India in 543 B.C. and founded the Sinhalese dynasty; long earlier, when that Buddha came who preached to his followers at Mahiyangana after having put to flight the Yakkhas (Veddas?); to an even still older beginning their ancestry went, to a time in the stone age when man vied for existence with prehistoric forms. 114

To-day hardly a Vedda true to the old traditions survives; not one that uses beaten bark for apparel, or depends for sustenance solely on the jungle. The inroads of civilisation and the effects of miscegenation with the neighbouring Sinhalese or Tamils are tending surely towards the extinction of the race. Yet, for all that, many of the old Vedda traits still survive in their degenerate descendants and these are still a link with an unfathomable past. 144 178

*Tail †Kandyan chief [P. 7]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

A Vedda woman, who had preserved bunches of the fruit in a pot of honey, was able to provide them; and so earned the name of her tribe. The Unapana *waruge*, like all the other *waruges*, also owed its name to a woman. She, when a king was out hunting in a parched land, supplied him with drink by squeezing out her dew-drenched cloth! Thirst apparently destroys the fastidiousness even of kings. The Rugam *waruge* derives from an incident connected with the building of the bund of Rugam tank. After its completion, this earth-work used to break down with the yearly floods despite all efforts at consolidating it. The Sinhalese king of the time had a vision one night telling him, that if a pregnant woman were built alive into the bund, it would ever after remain intact. A Vedda woman was sacrificed, and her clan received the name of the tank. The Uru *waruge* was called after a child-birth in a pig's hole; the Tala *waruge* after such an episode in a *talawa* or glade; the Nabudena, Kiribo and Embille *waruges* after similar occurrences under *nabudu*, *kiribo* and *embille* trees respectively. The Veddas being nomadic these incidents are common. Gama, as we have seen, owed his name to being born on the way (*gamana*).

Though shy and retiring by nature, Veddas are always to be found in the vicinity of Sinhalese settlements; and that, for good reasons: Ceylon being but a small island, its remotest forests are easily accessible; more so in recent years when roads and railways have spread out their tentacles everywhere claiming from Nature her wildest solitudes. Any jungles that have not yet fallen a prey to planting enterprise owe it largely to their aridity and unhealthiness. Nowhere is there a spot in Ceylon to-day that is not within ten miles of some habitation. Besides, it is to the mutual advantage of both Vedda and Sinhalese to be near each other, for if the one can supply grain in days of dearth, the other can repay tenfold with flesh and honey in season.

The Sinhalese affect an indulgent tolerance towards the Veddas, and aver them to be more of a nuisance than a help, saying the Veddas have to be kept alive when starving. The Vedda, on the other hand, will tell you that he is never in want; for the jungle, even in its worst months, is never totally devoid of food for him who knows where to find it: *kanava* and *kotha* combs are always there, and meat and yams of one sort or another. It must however be admitted, that the Veddas have a great partiality for what the unaided jungle cannot give—*kurrukkan*, maize, and tobacco. Rice is a welcome occasional meal to the Vedda, but he cannot do without *kurrukkan*; it takes much rice to fill the stomach, whereas a *kurrukkan* cake is like a stone, and even a small piece satisfies.

A Sinhalese told us that if you gave a Vedda much by way of barter, he would never come near you again, but would go where the giving was more niggardly. (What a salve to the conscience!) We asked a Vedda if this was true: "Much they give us," he said; "though they are always ready enough to take all we give them—and more."

In the bottom of their hearts the Veddas have a suspicion that the Sinhalese wish them no good. A Vedda, when asked how it was that their numbers had dwindled so, said, with simple faith, that it was due to the Sinhalese having killed out his people, by giving them charmed tobacco to eat, so that they died of disease or misadventure. The recent influenza epidemic fairly wiped out the last of the Veddas.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

sticks are easily obtainable from broken branches scattered everywhere. Gama, who was entrusted with the demonstration, chose two twigs, one the thickness of the index finger and about a foot and a half long, the other as thick as the little finger and about ten inches long. Having barked these, he whittled down the centre of the larger stick, and, in the flat surface thus produced, scooped out a shallow cavity, at one border of which he contrived a V-shaped extension. A piece of cloth about two inches square was placed on the ground under the centre of the stick which was held firmly down, cavity uppermost, by the toes of the operator, aided by the hands of an assistant. The smaller stick was then placed vertically over the other—its point, rendered bluntly conical, engaging in the cavity—and briskly rotated between the open palms. The firm downward pressure with which these movements were accompanied, caused the palms to descend the length of the stick from time to time. As often as this happened, the hands were quickly disengaged and re-applied as before to the upper part, and the twirling manoeuvre repeated. This had been done but twice when smoke was seen. Soon a small heap of charred dust like coffee-grounds accumulated round the hole, to escape down the V-shaped gutter on to the cloth. The smoke increased; there was a smell of charred wood. Suddenly a spark was thrown on to the black dust and the rag caught fire. A few dry leaves were collected and set alight. Within two minutes of the commencement of the operation there was a lively fire. When the smoke is observed to come from the accumulated dust, apart from that at the point of contact between the two sticks, it is a sign that the object is achieved. The rag is then rolled to enclose the dust—cigarette-fashion—and blown into at one end, so that it soon smokes heavily and catches fire.

It is strange that an art so simple in adept hands (not by any means so in those of a novice) should have been allowed to fall into disuse in wild Ceylon. I have seen refinements of this method; a coconut-shell, flat stone, or skull of a small animal for instance, being used by an assistant to press down the vertical stick, and a twist of bark to rotate it but they were less effectual than the simple procedure I have described.

ARCHERY

The present day Veddas, we have seen, are poor bowmen; they have, however, not yet quite lost the art of fashioning superb bows and arrows.

The bow is made from the *mahakakala-gaha* or the *kobawela*; the stone bow (*gal-dhunna*) from the *gatawela-gaha*; the bow string from the inner sheath of the bark of *aralu-wel*.*

The size of the bow is proportioned to the archer's strength. I have seen one six and a half feet long and as thick as a child's wrist; and, judging from its drawing power, no hand but a giant's could have wielded it. The usual length of a bow is from five and a half feet to five feet ten inches. It is made of a single stave, thick at the centre, without contrivance to give grip, flattened along the back, and tapering towards the horns which, without being notched, are tightly encircled by a few turns of cord to prevent the string slipping.

The arrow is made from the *ee* or *velang*† tree, the wood of which when dry is of remarkable lightness. A straight twig the girth of the finger

*Terminalia chebula.

†Pterospermum suberifolium.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

the other heel. Python fat is used for fractures. *Nagamaru-alla* has a great reputation as an aphrodisiac, less among the Veddas than among the Moors and Tamils. *Bing kohomba* (*munronia pumila*) gathered in the hills, and *kanna* (*cannabis indica*) grown surreptitiously, are always barterable. Besides the lesser poisons used for stupefying fish, there are the deadly *neengalla-alla* (*gloriosa superba*); *manna-kolle* (*laportea crenulata*); *thea-hadurugedde* (*carbera odallam*) and *kirinthea*.

There can be little doubt that much of the *cannabis indica* obtainable in Ceylon is grown in the forests by the encouragement of Moors. Traffic in the drug being illegal, the plant is cultivated clandestinely in sequestered jungle clearings or scattered amidst the vegetation of *chenas*. Though the plants fetch a good price, they are hardly worth the trouble and risk involved in tending them; and they say that "money got from *kanna* never stays in the hand." Not only have the plants to be watered for at least three months, but, very often, just as the crop is ready for harvesting, a thief helps himself to it. The commodity is conveyed to the lonely coast or the high road in the dead of night, along unfrequented game trails, in bags containing nests, grain, or dried meat.

A poignant story concerns the discovery of the *nagamaru-alla*, that esteemed aphrodisiac so difficult to find. A Vedda boy and his sister were travelling alone in the forest, when a shower of rain drove them to seek shelter under a tree. As is usual with Veddas when they rest, the boy stuck his arrows into the ground. Then, taking out of his pouch of monkey skin a chew of *demata* bark, he shared it with his sister; and, plucking out an arrow from the ground, placed on its point a little lime and gave it to her. She had scarcely tasted this when she began to manifest unsisterly familiarity. Her brother, incensed and shamed, drew his bow and killed her on the spot. Overcome by sorrow at what he had done, he debated in his mind as to why his sister, so good before, should suddenly have behaved so shamelessly. It occurred to him that the explanation might lie in the spot the arrow had been implanted; digging there he found a yam his arrow had transfixed. Thus was its named derived *nagamaru-alla* or yam that killed a sister; the Tamils call it *thangai kolai* which means the same thing. The marks of the tragedy are said to be evident to this day in the red spots that fleck the flower and leaf. I have seen the plant, a ground orchid, twice, but only the white-flowered variety not the reputedly more potent mottled. The slender stalk, bearing a delicate flower about half the size of a lupin, grows out of two downy ovoid yams.

The proper home of the Vedda is the *galge* or cave; and in these until recent years, the wilder of them exclusively lived. Now they only serve as occasional haunts, and therefore often have other occupants besides Veddas, chiefly bears; for this reason no Vedda approaches an unoccupied cave without warning: "*Cho-ho-ho, cho-ho-ho*," he shouts. "*Kiribala, haria, haria, cho-ho-ho, cho-ho-ho*." A snarl and a rush often greet the words. These rock-shelters are invariably hidden away among trees and boulders, and are extremely difficult to find except by those who know them.

Many of the caves are spacious, open and inviting; others dark and forbidding. Some source of water, such as a stream or spring, is usually at hand. The sloping roofs of the caves often present such crude picture galleries as we saw at Henanagalla, also wasps' nests, and the clustering